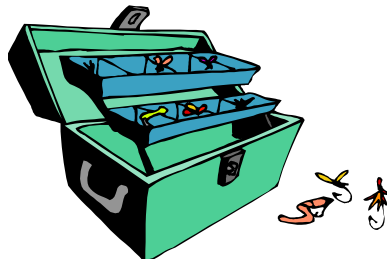




Tips for the Rehabilitation Counselor Working with Students in Transition



Tips for the Rehabilitation Counselor Working with Students in Transition

<u>Section</u>	<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
I.	Introduction and Purpose of the Manual	3-4
II.	Introduction to Transition Services for Students in High School.....	5-7
III.	The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) & The Transition Plan	8-9
IV.	Transition Planning and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997	10-11
V.	The Rehabilitation Act and the IDEA	12
VI.	The Role of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Transition Process	13-14
VII.	Tips for Working with Students in the Transition Process.....	15-18
VIII.	Eligibility Determination for Students in High School	19
IX.	Assistive Technology.....	20
X.	Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High School Students	
	• Project Skills.....	21-23
	• Youth Leadership Forum.....	24
	• Guidance and Vocational Counseling	25
XI.	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.....	26-27
XII.	Transition Services Liaison Project.....	28
XIII.	SD Benefits, Planning, Assistances & Outreach For SSI & SSDI Beneficiaries	29
XIV.	Resource Information.....	30

Special Thank You To:

Lisa Pierce, DRS Counselor, Brookings
Karen Montgomery Smith, DRS Counselor, Aberdeen
Gerald Raabe, DRS District Supervisor, Brookings
Bernie Grimme, Assistant Director of DVR, Pierre
And
Lindsay Peitz, format and design

Tips for the Rehabilitation Counselor Working with Students in Transition was compiled through the Transition to Adulthood Systems Change Project, Fall 2000. Acknowledgements to: Transition Requirements Guide, Western Regional Resource Center College of Education, UAP, University of Oregon, May 2000; The South Dakota Parent Connection; Office of Disability Services, South Dakota State University, Brookings.

(The Transition to Adulthood Systems Change Project is funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, under a SD Office of Special Education and Division of Rehabilitation Services grant. This is a Black Hills Special Services Cooperative publication, which does not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the departments granting funds.)

I. Introduction

Transition and transition planning for all students is not easy and is more complicated for students with disabilities. Far too many students with disabilities leave school lacking the academic, technical, and social skills necessary to find and/or maintain employment, and often the jobs they do find are low paying and offer no health benefits. Identifying the challenges students will face as adults, and preparing them to meet these demands successfully, requires careful transition planning and a lot of coordination of services that begin in the school as early as age 14.

The School District must maintain responsibility for student training and assessment during high school transition.

Due to the nature of Vocational Rehabilitation services and the overall positive impact these services have made in the lives of students with disabilities over the years, the VR counselor may be looked to for many of the answers when working with students in the transition process. It is important to remember that the school must maintain responsibility for student training and assessment during transition and that counseling and guidance may be the most meaningful services the VR counselor has to offer. The VR counselor is not just a fiscal agent, purchasing services or equipment, but providing the support, options, encouragement, creativity and (along with the school) that safety net if early efforts do not work. Aside from the Project Skills program, VR services can be limited for students in high school, but your involvement as a team member and your creativity will play an important role in the process. The key is to be an active partner on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and to encourage a person-centered approach to whatever services are identified as a need for each student. Both the school staff and the VR counselor need to be creative when identifying these services.

Guidance and counseling may be the most meaningful services the VR counselor has to offer to students in transition.

The purpose of this manual is to:

- ❑ Provide the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor a basic orientation to the transition process for students in high school.
- ❑ Provide information on the role of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the transition process.
- ❑ Explain the importance of Vocational Rehabilitation services and what services are available to students.
- ❑ Review eligibility requirements for students referred for VR services and Project Skills.
- ❑ Provide resource information that will enhance the quality of transition services.
- ❑ And provide the VR counselor with some important tips to working with students in the transition process.



II. Introduction to Transition Services for Students

What is "Transition"?

Transition is the passage or the movement from one environment, stage or subject to another. In other words, transition is a "Change", a change that will take place for students in high school. We have all experienced change in our lives, whether it was by our own choice or it was decided for us. We have had to change from one school to another, one job to another or if our jobs have undergone change internally. Even when you have been at your job for a while, you can no doubt remember the feelings you first had when you started your job or if you are a new Rehabilitation Counselor, then you are in "transition" right now. You probably feel anxiety, fear of the unknown and want avoid the unexpected. "Transition" and Transition services for students in high school are designed and developed to avoid the unexpected and to prepare the students for the "change" that will take place when they graduate from high school and move on to post secondary activities and environments.

Transition services are designed and developed to avoid the unexpected and prepare students for the future.

In many ways the transition from school to the adult world is like planning a road trip. It is assisting the students in identifying a destination and developing a road map to help ensure that they arrive where they want to go.



Transition planning is:

- ❑ The Process of defining where a student would like to live and work after graduation from high school.
- ❑ Identifying the best roads or paths to assist them in getting there.
- ❑ An effort to help each student to reach the best possible outcomes, encourages dreams, and finds answers.
- ❑ Assisting students to understand their disability and how it affects their ability to learn in a typical classroom.
- ❑ Assisting the students to understand their rights within the transition process, access services effectively and make informed choices about the future.

The VR counselor, along with the IEP team, should assess the student's progress during the transition process to determine the type of services that will be needed when the student leaves the school. With respect to the student's dreams, aspirations and abilities, the team should identify and choose a specific post-school activity (i.e., post-secondary education, competitive employment and/or additional employment and independent living skills training). This decision greatly impacts the type of services that will be needed and the amount of involvement from other agencies in the process. By selecting post school activities prior to graduation, it will help to guide the VR counselor, regular education teachers and adult services agency staff to prepare the student as well as the agency providing the post-high school supports for a smooth transition. For example, a student with a learning disability who has made the decision to attend a post-secondary educational opportunity will give direction to the planning team. The team can better prepare the student for college life and better prepare the staff at the post-secondary institution on the needs of the student.

*Transition Services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-orientated process that promotes **movement from school to post-school environments and activities.***

The coordinated set of activities must:

- (1) be based upon the individual student's needs taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and*
- (2) include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional evaluation.*

Be an active partner on the IEP team and encourage a person-centered approach to transition planning.



III. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) & The Transition Plan

The IEP is the legal document reflecting the commitment made by the school to provide FAPE.

The IEP - The Student's high school program should thoroughly prepare him or her for achieving the desired post-school goals and promotes this movement from school to the post-school environments and activities. **The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the legal document** reflecting the commitment made by the school to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) designed to meet the unique needs of the student with a disability. The IEP is similar to the IPE used in Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and it needs to be developed, reviewed and revised (at least) on an annual basis. The IEP team can meet to amend the IEP when changes take place during the school year or goals need to be revised, but the IEP must be updated at least on an annual basis. This document should reflect the services and supports needed to assist the student gain the skills, experiences and connections to make the student's post-school goals a reality.

In order to assist with effective transition planning and address the transition requirements of the IEP, the team must develop a transition plan at the age of 14 or younger, if determined appropriate. The transition plan should be integral to the discussions and decisions within the entire IEP. Ideally, transition planning should drive the IEP meeting and should not be a separate document than the IEP or completed at the end of the IEP development.



The IEP Team

According to the IDEA of 1997 selected persons are required to be a part of the IEP development and participate in the IEP meeting process. These persons include:

- ❑ The student, who must be invited to participate in the IEP meeting by age 14 or younger if transition service needs are discussed. If the student doesn't attend the meeting, other steps must be taken to engage the student in the process.
- ❑ Parent (and if desired, the family)
- ❑ At least one of the student's Special Education Teachers (or, if appropriate, Related Services Providers)
- ❑ LEA (Local Education Agency) Representative, which would include a principal, or superintendent, or a staff person acting on his or her behalf.
- ❑ At least one of the student's Regular Education Teachers (if the student is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment).
- ❑ Other appropriate agency personnel (if determined by the agency or the parent to have special knowledge or expertise)
- ❑ The VR counselor is considered to be appropriate agency personnel with expertise in area of guidance, counseling and employment related activities (including Project Skills). Your role in the meeting is discussed in Section VI, the role of the VR counselor in the Transition process.



IV. Transition Planning and IDEA of 1997

The Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) '97 and the final regulations added important provisions to the IDEA of 1990 transition requirements. The following must be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP):

“(b)(1) For each student with a disability beginning at age 14 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the student under the applicable components of the student’s IEP that focuses on the student’s courses of study (such as participation in advanced placement courses or a vocational education program); and

“(2) For each student beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.

Since the wording in the first two items above (transition service needs and needed transition services) is so similar, there has been confusion in the field as to the difference between the requirements at age 14 (or younger when appropriate) and those at age 16 (or younger when appropriate).

Here are suggestions to clarify the misunderstandings. Among other elements, IDEA '97 requires that the student’s IEP include:

- ❑ A statement of transition service needs at age 14 or younger, if appropriate.
- ❑ A statement of needed transition services at age 16 or younger, if appropriate.

The VR counselor should be aware of sociological issues while working with students.

A Statement of Transition Service Needs

For all students, starting at age 14 (or younger, when appropriate) and continuing until the student is no longer eligible for special education services, the IEP team must identify the courses of study or a multi-year description of coursework to achieve the student's desired post-school goals. The transition service needs requirement is intended to assist the student make a successful transition to his or her goals for life after high school by selecting ***"courses of study that will be meaningful to the student's future and motivate the student to complete his or her education"*** (Appendix A, question 11). The requirement for transition service needs must be reviewed annually and continues until the student graduates with a regular high school diploma or is no longer eligible for IDEA '97 services.

A Statement of Needed Transition Service

For all students, starting at age 16 (or younger, when appropriate) the IEP team must develop a "statement of needed transition services". ***"The statement of needed transition services...includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation."*** (34 CFR300.29(a)(3))

In addition, the statement of needed transition services must also include, ***"a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages."*** (34 CFR.347(b)(2))

To facilitate the development of this statement of the interagency responsibilities, ***"the public agency shall also invite a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not do so, the public agency shall take other steps to obtain participation of the other agency in the planning of any transition services."*** (34 CFR 300.344(b)(3))

V. The Rehab Act and the IDEA

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended through the 1998 amendments and the IDEA, both refer to collaboration with community agencies and the Rehab Act specifically refers to special education services offered through IDEA. The Rehabilitation Act states: ***Rehabilitation's services planning should start, in most cases, before the student leaves school, and be closely coordinated with educational services from the school.*** The relationship between the two agencies (VR and School) is significant. Both VR counselors and school personnel must agree on a coordinated set of activities needed for a successful transition and develop a coordinated program based on the student's preferences or choices, needs, and interests. The school or educational agency staff should refer students to vocational rehabilitation for services during the transition process and at age 16 or earlier if necessary.

It is important to note that the school district has the responsibility of providing the services for the student with a disability to become a successful learner. The transition from school to adulthood may be complicated because the adult system, including VR services, is very different: there are many public and private agencies that provide services for these students when they graduate from high school. However, unlike educational services, there is no absolute entitlement to those services. In other words, different, more restrictive eligibility criteria, long waiting lists, and uncertain funding may keep a young adult from obtaining services upon leaving high school. This is why VR counselor involvement in transition planning at an early age is so critical.

When planning with a student, it is important to remember that transition services and activities must include meaningful employment experiences, should provide young adults with disabilities with the necessary skills to make informed choices and decisions, and gain full inclusion in society in all aspects of their lives.

The LEA should refer students with disabilities to VR for services at age 16 or earlier if necessary.

VI. The Role of the VR Counselor in Transition Planning

The VR Counselor should provide both the special education teacher and the student with disabilities and his or her family information, guidance and vocational counseling. Far too often the VR agency is viewed as a fiscal agent available to purchase items that may not be covered under other entities. The VR counselor needs to be available to the IEP team to act as a consultant and assist with making informed choices based on previous assessments, experiences and student aspirations.

The VR counselor should meet with the student and his or her family or advocate to explore his/her interests, find out preferences, identify other resources and learn what school and other adult service agencies are available and what they have to offer.

The VR counselor should also participate in transition planning meetings (IEP development) by:



Providing information about services and eligibility criteria for community or adult services and supports (e.g., college support services and financial aid, vocational rehabilitation services, family services, social security work incentives).



Helping to explain the differences between the entitlement of school programs and eligibility of adult services.



Assisting the team in assessing the possible need for continued school support for students ages 18 to 21.



Assisting the team in identifying community or adult services that may assist the student in achieving his or her post-school goals.



Assisting the student and his or her family in the application processes for supports and services at colleges, training institutions, or adult services, as appropriate.

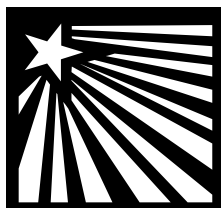


Alerting families and school staff to potential waiting lists for services.



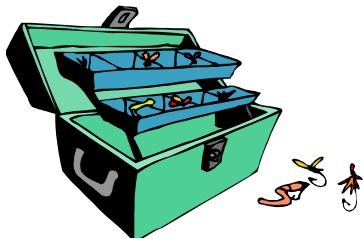
Providing services, when appropriate, to the student prior to exiting the school system. This may mean through the Project Skills program, assistive technology (equipment), and various training, mentor and apprenticeship programs that lead toward competitive employment or post-secondary education. **(The decision to provide VR services for a student prior to exiting a school program needs to be made by the VR counselor on an individual basis. This decision should be made in consideration of the wishes of the IEP team, the available resources and the needs of the student. In some cases, "financial need" must also be considered.)**

**Be available to the IEP team for
vocational guidance and
counseling.**



VII. Tips for Working with Students

In this section we have provided "tips" and information on when, where and how a VR counselor can effectively be involved in the transition process for students with disabilities. (When reviewing this section, please consider additional tips and information that may be included in future VR counselor guides. Submit your comments and suggestions to:



Transition Services Liaison Project

221 S. Central

Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Phone: (605) 224-5336 Fax: (605) 224-8320

E-mail: brohrbach@tie.net

Tips:



Work with the regional Transition Services Liaison for assistance with transition services issues, resources and Project Skills questions. To find out whom your regional Transition Liaison is call **(605) 224-5336**.



Schedule regular times to be available in the schools to meet with teachers and students that are receiving VR services and students who may be referred to the VR system. Parents should be encouraged to attend these meetings.



Provide an in-service for special education teachers, high school counselors, administrators and other school staff on the VR system of eligibility and service provision.

More Tips...



Develop partnerships and communicate with community service agency staff such as the local One-Stop Career Center, Adjustment Training Center, Mental Health Center and Independent Living Center. Develop vendor-ships and purchase service arrangements with community providers.



The VR counselor should become involved with each student with a suspected disability and his/her team as early as possible (as early as 16 years old or earlier if necessary). The VR counselor should be aware of sociological issues while working with students and take the time to become educated and familiar with the cultural/ethnic backgrounds, and religious beliefs and practices. When these issues are important to the student and/or family, specific considerations should be made in the transition planning to respect the dignity and wishes of the student and family.



Assess VR intervention (and/or eligibility).

Appropriate assessments may need to be considered to help the student make an informed choice for the future and to help identify specific goals, services or future needs. Some helpful assessments include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation
- ◆ Independent Living Evaluation
- ◆ Psychological or Neuropsychological Evaluation
- ◆ Assistive Technology Assessments
- ◆ Situational Assessments



Determine eligibility of VR services and develop an IPE (when appropriate) with students prior to exiting high school.



Encourage student self-advocacy and self-determination when attending IEP and transition planning meetings.

MORE TIPS...



Provide resource information to the student, parent and school personnel and/or assist with the development of the IEP (Individual Education Program) and transition planning. The overwhelming volume of information and resources may become confusing to students and their families, especially to parents who are trying to assist their son/daughter in making an informed and educated decision for the future. By providing small amounts of information throughout the stages of transition will help to assure a better understanding of the process and the resources available. It will also assist the parents in feeling more comfortable with the VR counselor, leading to trust, appreciation and a willingness to actively participate as a team member in planning for transition.



Provide referral information on the Social Security Administration (SSA).



Monitor quality of services and advocate on behalf of the student.



The IEP team must review the progress of a student who is planning to graduate within that year, to determine if he/she has achieved his/her IEP goals and objectives. In a situation where it is apparent that the student will not achieve his/her IEP goals and objectives and/or the IEP team identifies a need for further growth in areas of social, emotional and job skills acquisition, continued school services may be requested. Any IEP team member i.e., VR counselor may suggest to the transition planning team the right of the student/family to request that he/she attend graduation ceremonies and not receive a signed diploma. The school administration may develop a certificate of completion for a student, but the financial responsibility for continued services remains with the school or education agency until the student reaches the IEP goals and objectives or until the end of the school year when he/she turns 21.

More Tips...



Provide guidance and resource information to the IEP team on post-secondary education options. This may include:

- ◆ Advocating for appropriate and reasonable accommodations in the post secondary environment.
- ◆ Providing assistance in accessing the appropriate assistive technology services and supports.



When necessary, assist the student in contacting the Coordinator at the Office of Disability Services at the post-secondary institution. This person typically works with the student, family, high school staff and VR counselor along with staff from the post-secondary institution to make the necessary and appropriate accommodations and modifications needed for the student to be successful in the new environment. It is important for the student to initiate the contact with Coordinator of Disability Services and provide verification of disability. A good time to contact this person is in the spring semester of the student's senior year. If there will be accommodations where costs are shared under the MOU (Memorandum Of Understanding) between the Board of Regents and Vocational Rehabilitation, it is critical that the VR counselor contact the Coordinator of Disability Services to provide the authorization for services. (To find a listing of the Coordinators of Disability Services in South Dakota, refer to the Resource Guide in the Transition Tackle Box.)

The Office of Disability services should be contacted in the spring semester of the students' senior year to coordinate services.

VIII. Eligibility

In the educational system, the identification of a specific disability, for example a learning disability, automatically makes a student eligible for special education services, because special education is an entitlement program. In the VR system, diagnosis of a learning disability does not automatically entitle one for services. According to the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, to be eligible for assistance from VR, an individual must:

1. Have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment;
2. Be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of employment; and,
3. Require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment. [Section 102 (a)(1)]

To determine eligibility for a student, the VR counselor should review existing data that are available in the students current school file. If the existing data are not sufficient or current, the VR counselor can obtain additional assessments to generate the information needed to make an eligibility determination. Counselors are required to use determination of a disability made by other agencies, including the education agency, provided those determinations are consistent with the requirements of the Act. Sources of such information include school records; medical and developmental histories; psychological and neuropsychological testing; interviews with parents and others, such as teachers and/or vocational evaluations and situational assessments.

For additional and more in-depth information on eligibility assessment tools and criteria, refer to the DRS Counselor Manual.



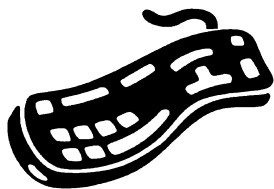
IX. Assistive Technology

The services available through Vocational Rehabilitation can play a critical role in assisting students with disabilities to enter post-secondary education environments as well as the community workforce. As with any other area of life, **assistive technology** (AT) can greatly enhance the educational and employment opportunities for these young adults. Assistive technology, by definition can be most any device that will improve, maintain or increase the daily living abilities of individuals with disabilities. This could be in the home, at work, in school or for leisurely purposes.

The **need** for AT must now be considered for *all* students when developing the IEP, it is "mandatory for the IEP team to consider each child's (student's) AT needs".

Some examples of AT devices include:

- ◆ Captioning
- ◆ Computer software
- ◆ FM systems and hearing aids
- ◆ Electronic notetakers
- ◆ Cassette recorders
- ◆ Word prediction software
- ◆ Adapted keyboards
- ◆ Voice recognition and synthesis software
- ◆ Head pointers and large print



X. Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Students

Project Skills

Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities. The Division of Rehabilitation Services initiated this program because many students with disabilities do not get an opportunity to participate in a paid work experience while in high school. By covering the cost of wages and with additional supports through the Project Skills program, it enables employers to provide these students with valuable work experiences in a real work setting.

In order to participate in Project Skills, students must:



- ✖ Be 16 years or older.
- ✖ Be enrolled in a certified high school program and be meeting acceptable academic and attendance requirements.
- ✖ Have an employment experience as part of the Individual Education Program (IEP) unless waived by the VR counselor.
- ✖ Apply for and be determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services through either the Division of Rehabilitation Services or Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired.

Students enrolled in a high school program with a section 504 plan may also participate in Project Skills. The decision to allow a student to participate must be made on an individual basis. The VR counselor should make his/her decision based on whether the student will benefit from the program.

If a student meets all of the requirements listed above, they must then complete a survey to identify jobs that show a high interest. Next, a school representative contacts employers to locate possible jobs that match the student's interest areas. Once an appropriate work experience site is located, the employer, student, vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor and school representative sign a Work Experience Agreement. The work experience can last from a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 250 hours, but students cannot work over 40 hours per week. During this time, students are paid minimum wage, \$5.15 per hour.

Vocational Rehabilitation provides funding for wages, FICA, worker's compensation, and other costs. VR can also assist in paying for other items needed for employment, such as uniforms or interpreters (support services), based on the individual student's needs. The local school district provides matching funds for

Project Skills through the provision of job development, job coaching and on-site monitoring. These services can be provided directly by the school district or may be purchased from another agency, such as an education cooperative, adjustment-training center, career learning center, or other agency approved by Vocational Rehabilitation. There is no financial obligation or benefits to the employer.

The employer is responsible to comply with the student's training plan and provide participants appropriate supervision and training. They are also responsible for providing safe and healthy working conditions and adhere to all child labor laws. The employer should maintain accurate time and attendance records and submit to the state on a weekly basis appropriately completed time cards. They should also provide adequate general liability, which is the same type of insurance that would cover any type of accident on the employer's premises, and automobile liability insurance (if driving an automobile is required for the job) covering actions of the participant.

The school is responsible in sharing the costs of the Project Skills program. The school's costs are in providing job development, job coaching and monitoring the student at the worksite. They can provide these services directly or purchase them from another agency or provider approved by DRS. The school should ensure that the student is receiving the necessary supports for job training according to the student's training plan. The Student's IEP should identify how the support services will be provided to the student and who will be providing them, even when the school contracts for support services through another agency.

The VR counselor should always maintain contact with employers in addition to the students who are participating in the project skills program. In a situation where there is no job coaching for a student, the VR counselor may want to review the needs of the student and the appropriateness of the student's involvement in the program.

Participation in the project skills program should be made on an individual basis.

Assess the potential for each student to benefit from the project skills program.

The Student is responsible to:

- Comply with the training plan.
- Comply with the employer/worksite personnel policies and practices with regard to attendance, leave of absence and general conduct while on the job.
- Use and treat all property of the worksite with reasonable care and respect and understand that failure to do so may result in liability for damages.
- Be to work on time, work the days scheduled, and dress appropriately for the job.

The school district is responsible to share in the costs of the project skills program.





YLF (Youth Leadership Forum)

The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) for students with disabilities is a unique career and leadership-training program for high school juniors and seniors to serve as delegates from their communities. Students will cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills as a result of participating in this four-day conference. The YLF is implemented at the state level by the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, state and local partners.

YLF is an educational and motivational conference with an intense schedule. Small "working groups" explore personal leadership and career plans. Social, artistic, athletic, and recreational activities abound, as these are part of leading a well-rounded life. Guest speakers address such topics as disability rights laws and innovations in technology. A farewell dance will allow a time to celebrate accomplishments with new friends. The key to the YLF is leadership by example. Adults with disabilities who have traveled the same path these young people are facing serve as group leaders and staff. Many other volunteers, some with disabilities and some without, help to make the program a success.

The students are chosen through a statewide competition that seeks students with disabilities who have leadership potential. Each applicant submits a standard form, an essay, and letters of recommendation. The group that is selected is representative of the state in terms of geography, gender, economic status, ethnicity and types of disabilities.

Your role as a VR counselor is to assist the YLF committee to identify and inform potential candidates about this unique program. Your assistance in sharing information about YLF to school staff, parents and students will enhance opportunities and improve the quality of the YLF program. For more information on the YLF or to ask how you can help, contact the Transition Services Liaison Project at 224-5336.

Assess each student for the opportunity to participate in YLF!!!

Guidance and Vocational Counseling



The LEA (Local Education Agency) is primarily responsible for student training, education and assessment prior to the student transitioning from high school and counseling and guidance may be the most meaningful services the VR counselor has to offer at this time. It is however, the right time to determine eligibility for VR services that may be needed when the student graduates from high school.

For more information on Vocational Rehabilitation services for students in transition, refer to Section VI , The Role of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Transition Process.



XI. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities receiving federal financial assistance and requires accommodations to ensure FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education). Section 504 clearly states that no discrimination against any person with a disability shall knowingly be permitted in programs or practices in any school district.

Under Section 504, the school district has the responsibility to provide notice to parents, identify, evaluate, and if a student is determined to be eligible under Section 504, to provide access to appropriate educational services.

There has been much confusion in the past regarding the relationship between Section 504 and special education laws and regulations. It must be emphasized that Section 504 falls under the **management of general education**. The school staff and parents should work in collaboration to help guarantee that students are provided with necessary accommodations and / or services. A student who is found to be disabled under Section 504 should be served by the resources provided through regular education. The exception to this standard would be a student who has been determined eligible as disabled under the IDEA. Such a student could receive special education services under IDEA and accommodations required under Section 504.

General Procedures

If a school district has reason to believe that because of a disability a student needs either accommodations or related services in the general educational environment in order to have equally effective participation in the school program, the district must notify the parent of an individual evaluation, evaluate the student, and develop and implement a plan for the delivery of all necessary educational modifications. Requirements for the evaluation and placement process are determined by the type of disability suspected and the type of services needed by the student. The evaluation must be sufficient to assess the nature and extent of the educational impact of the disability in order to determine appropriate educational services.

Determination of what services are needed must be made by a group of persons knowledgeable about the student and Section 504 eligibility. Services must be documented in the student's file and reviewed periodically. A student's program must be provided in the least restrictive environment.

Under Section 504, parents or guardians must be provided with notice of any action that changes the identification, evaluation or placement of their child. The parents should be included in the evaluation and placement process whenever possible. Parents or guardians are entitled to an impartial due process hearing if they disagree with school district decisions.

Section 504 regulations concerning provisions of a free appropriate public education closely parallel requirements of IDEA. Individuals, who qualify for Section 504 educational services may require an individualized, modified education program. The program must be based upon current evaluations and periodically reviewed.

In summary, it is important to keep in mind that some students who have physical or mental impairments that substantially limit their ability to participate in the education program are entitled to protection under Section 504 even though they may not fall into special education categories. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT SECTION 504 IS A RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM.

(You may contact the State Department of Education 504 Coordinator for specific information and guidance regarding program and facilities accessibility)

Students entitled to protection under Section 504 and not receiving special education services may be eligible for the Project Skills program. This is a Vocational Rehabilitation program and eligibility for Project Skills is determined on an individual bases by the VR counselor and / or his or her supervisor.

XII. Transition Services Liaison Project

The Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) is a state initiated project offered through the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the Office of Special Education (OSE), which contract with the Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC) for project management. The coordinator of the project is based in Pierre and coordinates the activities of three regional based Transition Liaisons. This person works closely with the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Office of Special Education at the state level. The three regionally based transition liaisons provide ongoing technical assistance to local level agencies and schools.

This project establishes the technical assistance and support needed by teaching and rehabilitation staff to carry out new federal mandates and provide technical assistance and training to students, families, LEA's (Local Education Agencies), and agencies seeking information on transition planning. Activities provided by the Regional Transition Liaisons can include:

- Training to students, families, schools, VR counselors and adult service agencies on transition and development of transition plans;
- Identifying and obtaining instructional materials and assistance with implementation of self-determination curriculum;
- Assistance with identification of local resources;
- Development of interagency councils to address regional transition service needs;
- Individual support/assistance.

The Regional Transition Liaisons can be reached by calling BHSSC Transition Liaison Project at (605) 224-5336.

XIII. SOUTH DAKOTA BENEFITS, PLANNING, ASSISTANCES AND OUTREACH FOR SSI & SSDI BENEFICIARIES

The South Dakota Outreach for Social Security Project is part of The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act. The purpose of the project is to explain work incentive programs to Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries who want to work.

This Outreach project will:

- Provide direct advice and assistance to these individuals.
- Provide benefits planning and assistance to beneficiaries with disabilities.
- Conduct outreach to beneficiaries with disabilities (and their families).
- Work with Federal, State, private agencies, and nonprofit organizations that serve beneficiaries with disabilities.
- Explain the Social Security Administration's work incentives, and inform beneficiaries of the effect of work on their benefits.
- Provide information on other supports available so they can make informed decisions about returning to work.
- Assist with identifying and utilizing SSA work incentives including Plans for Achieving Self Support (PASS).

The project will utilize existing outreach networks such as Social Security and Vocational Rehabilitation to help in the identification of individuals with disabilities that could benefit from receiving this information. The Benefits Specialist will travel throughout South Dakota to make these services more accessible for the consumers in their local areas.

For more information about the Outreach Project, you can call or write to:

South Dakota Benefits Specialist

BHSSC

221 S. Central

Pierre, SD 57501

Phone: (605) 224-5336

E-mail: benefitsworking4u@tie.net

XIV. Resource Information

There is additional information on resources for students in transition in the Resource Manual in the Transition Tackle Box.